

our tax system into one that is more pro-family, one that encourages investment and savings, and one that moves the country in the direction of a fairer, flatter, simpler Tax Code, a fairer, flatter, simpler alternative to the system we have today, he described those plans now pending in Congress as reckless in remarks that the President made yesterday here in Washington to the National Mortgage Bankers Association. In fact, the President went on to say that our approach of phasing out the current income tax system and replacing the current 9,000 page, 5.5 million word Tax Code with a fairer, flatter, simpler alternative, he described that approach yesterday as "misguided, reckless and irresponsible."

I read this entire article, and I have searched his remarks trying to find out what the President would propose. If he does not like our alternative, then what would the President counter with? What would he propose as a better alternative to our plans? Or is the President, as it would appear from his remarks, defending the current Tax Code and the current tax system?

It would appear that the President does favor the status quo, that he is, as I said in my opening comments, defending the indefensible. He cannot possibly think that a system that has created, and this has now been well documented in hearings that we have had back here in Washington, a culture of abuse that has led to many collection abuses around the country, he cannot possibly be defending that system, could he? It is a system that has resulted in one newspaper headline after another.

I cited these earlier this morning on the floor under morning business, but since more of our colleagues are present now, I want to share these headlines again. Here is one: The IRS Unveils New Taxpayer Protections to Limit Agents' Ability to Seize Assets. It actually quotes in this article the new Commissioner of the IRS as saying, quote, I am especially troubled about the emphasis placed on collection statistics, otherwise known as quotas, without an equal emphasis on customer service and safeguarding taxpayer rights.

Look at some of these other newspaper headlines: New Audit at IRS Finds Some Agents Focused on Quotas. We are talking about many, many agents in IRS offices around the country. Treasury Chief Vows Action against IRS Quotas. Top Official Offers a Mea Culpa. That is an apology, I guess, for the IRS, for the collection abuses and for a system again that targets individual American taxpayers and sets out quotas, if one can imagine, for IRS collection agents.

We are trying desperately to reform the IRS, as I said earlier today, into an agency that treats taxpayers with the respect and provides them with the service that they deserve. But, instead, the President is throwing up roadblocks in our way, defending the inde-

fensible, standing up for the current system, and using scare tactics to frighten the American people about what would happen if we move the country in the direction of a fairer, flatter, and simpler tax system.

Now we are attempting to initiate a national discussion about either replacing the current income tax with a national sales tax, a tax on consumption, or a flat tax. We believe that is the way to go. Both of these plans would be simpler and fairer than the current code, the system that the President is defending.

I will tell you, I personally object when the President uses language like reckless, misguided, and irrelevant. I will tell you, I will tell the President, I will tell my colleagues who support the President's position on this what Jack Farris said, the President of the National Federation of Independent Business, an organization of small businesses around the country trying to garner one million signatures on a pledge to replace the current tax system and scrap the Tax Code, which would end the IRS as we know it. It is a death sentence for the current Tax Code by the year 2001. Mr. Farris said, in response to the President, what is irrelevant is a 500-million-word Tax Code that is antiwork, antisaving, and antifamily.

One of our former colleagues, now Senator TIM HUTCHINSON from Arkansas, was quoted as saying yesterday, with less than 6 weeks left before Americans must file their tax returns, President Clinton has shown himself to be out of touch with the plight of the American people.

Mr. Speaker, we definitely need to move the country in a direction of a Tax Code and tax system that would change the current disincentive in the system that favors spending and consumption over savings and investment. This comment, this approach of the President of disparaging the free enterprise system is not going to work. We need to revive our Tax Code in order to move the country in a direction of a fairer, simpler system and to maintain our national prosperity.

ENGEL SLAMS BELGRADE'S BLOODY CRACKDOWN IN KOSOVA; CALLS FOR UNITED STATES TO STOP IGNORING THE SITUATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, just yesterday there was a brutal crackdown in a region called Kosova, which is home to more than 2,000 ethnic Albanians who live under the oppression of Serb tyranny. The Serbian police came in and summarily started beating and killing ethnic Albanians, more than 20 of whom were murdered in cold blood.

The region of Kosova, which is 90 percent Albanian, I have been there a

number of times as chairman of the Albanian Interest Caucus of this House. The people there are truly a people living under oppression. They have no political rights. They have no human rights. They have no economic rights. Unemployment is unbelievable. Day after day after day turns into months; and year after year, there is no improvement on the ground.

The United States cannot, Mr. Speaker, stand idly by and allow Serbian President Milosevic and his henchmen to brutally kill people for no reason. This oppression must stop, and the United States is the only country that has the power to stop it.

I have been calling for a number of years for the appointment of a special envoy from the United States to the region of Kosova. Only if the United States gets involved with the appointment of a special envoy do I believe that progress will be made on the ground in Kosova. This would be very similar to what we have attempted to do in Ireland with Senator Mitchell. And we ought to forthwith appoint a special envoy.

My resolution, H.Con.Res. 205, calls for the appointment of a special envoy and calls for sanctions, strong sanctions to be continued on Serbia until there is improvement in the economic and political and human freedoms in Kosova.

Just last week, Mr. Speaker, our government loosened some of the sanctions imposed on Serbia. It sent the wrong message at the wrong time, and I am sure unwittingly contributed to Mr. Milosevic and his henchmen thinking that they can brutally crack down on the Albanians in Kosova.

It is time now to reimpose those sanctions that we removed just last week. It is time to have new sanctions. It is time to make sure that the outer wall of sanctions is in place, continues to be in place and continues to be expanded, because Serbia cannot practice this kind of oppression and think they can get away with it.

Now in 3 weeks the Albanians in Kosova are scheduled to hold elections. And, again, Mr. Speaker, there is no coincidence that these crackdowns came 3 weeks before the Albanian elections are to be held. This is clearly a blatant attempt to intimidate the Albanians, to try to prevent them from exercising the political freedoms that all of us say that we hold dear.

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I have often said that the people of Kosova, 90 percent of whom are ethnic Albanians, have the same right to self-determination that all peoples of the world have; no more, but certainly no less. And they have a right to determine their political future, they have a right to determine their economic future, they have a right to determine all of their future, and they do not have the right to be people under occupation, oppressively, brutally occupied and beaten by the Serb authorities.

This is not simply an internal problem in Serbia; this is a human rights problem. The autonomous region of Kosova, in my opinion and the opinion of anybody who likes freedom, has to understand that this region, the people living in the region, should be the sole determining factor in terms of their political future. They should decide their own political future.

Now, both President Bush and President Clinton had issued a Christmas warning saying that the United States would draw the line and would not stand idly by with a brutal crackdown in Kosova. My big fear is that this is the start of a crackdown, and we know what Serb nationalism can do. We saw what it did in Bosnia.

Bosnia could seem like a tea party compared to what could happen in Kosova if the world community and the United States and the European nations do not get involved right now. With 2 million ethnic Albanians, some people would like nothing better to do than to drive a million of them over the border into Albania, and perhaps massacre another million. We cannot stand idly by and allow this to happen.

Only the United States, again, has the power and clout to say to Milosevic and his henchmen, we will not allow you to brutally oppress the people of Kosova, the ethnic Albanians in Kosova. They are entitled to all kinds of rights and freedoms that we treasure here in the United States.

What kind of life is it for people that have no hope of getting employed? What hope is it of people, what kind of life can they expect, if there are no political freedoms, if they cannot get a job, if they cannot teach in the Albanian language, if the schools are oppressed?

There have been peaceful demonstrations going on and going on, and these people have been clubbed and beaten brutally. We cannot allow this to happen. We cannot send a message and say that because things are a little better in Bosnia, now is the time to forget about Kosova.

Mr. Speaker, we must reimpose the sanctions, we must have a special envoy, and we must unequivocally call for freedom for the Albanian people in Kosova.

TAX CODE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from South Dakota (Mr. Thune) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the President came out and criticized a piece of legislation of which I am a co-sponsor of that would call for sunseting the Tax Code in the year 2001. Frankly, I think when he came out and did that, he really did defend the indefensible.

We have a Tax Code in this country which has become an abomination for the people who have to comply with that law, from individuals, to families

to small businesses. Look at where we are today in terms of the volumes of information, the volumes of instructions, the volumes of actual forms of tax law that are out there, the laws and regulations, some 6,000 pages, 34.5 pounds. We spend in this country over 5 billion man-hours a year complying with the Tax Code. There are 480 different forms.

As I went through my tax return this year, I did it a couple of weeks ago, the thing that occurred to me is that the people of this country, even though we lowered taxes last summer in the balanced budget agreement, the people of this country have an even more difficult job this year of complying with the Tax Code than they did last year, because every time Congress touches the Tax Code, we make it more complicated.

I went through those forms. In the back of one particular form there is this elaborate computation and elaborate calculation in which it asks you if this is smaller than this or lesser than this but larger than this, multiply it by 15 percent and subtract it from here and keep going, and on and on and on.

We have a responsibility to the tax-paying people of this country to make the revenue system, the collection system, in this country fair, and to make it simple. So when we talk about eliminating the Tax Code and coming up with a new Tax Code for a new century, that ought to be a goal that all of us in this chamber share, and I would hope that the White House shares it as well.

When the President made his statement yesterday critical of this particular piece of legislation, it indicated he is willing to defend the status quo and willing to go along with what has been the program here for too many years in Washington, D.C.

I think that if we are going in fact to reform the Tax Code in this country, that it really starts with a couple of principles, and I think the first one has to do with the fact that if we are going to this year go about the process of writing a tax bill, that the first thing we ought to have is a principle that it ought to be broad-based.

So we have introduced legislation, I along with the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. DUNN), that in fact would deliver tax relief to the extent we are able to do that this year in a way that is broad-based, in which all people benefit from a growing economy.

We have also introduced legislation that would further simplify, rather than complicate, the Tax Code. That is something, as I said, that is desperately needed. We need to move in that direction in the next century, so we can have a new Tax Code for a new century.

So having said that, and having noted that there is a lot of internal resistance in this particular city to changing the Tax Code, I take some consolation in the fact that the same resistance was there when it came to

welfare reform a few years back, and when it came to a balanced budget agreement.

People said all of these things could not be done. And what had to be done in order for Congress to get to that goal is to establish a deadline, to create a deadline out there, to say this is what we are going to do on this date.

The only way we can do that, with the Tax Code is to create a similar deadline, and that is to say to the people of this country that we are going to do away with the existing code and that we are going to start over, with a new Tax Code that makes sense to the people who have to pay the taxes in this country.

So as we pursue this legislation, sunseting the Internal Revenue Code in the year 2001, I think that it ought to be something that everybody in this body can support, because certainly the people in this country are willing to support that. We cannot continue to go on defending the status quo and allowing all the resistance to change that is in this Washington-based community to keep us from doing the right thing for the people of this country.

As I said earlier, as we move towards that goal, to the extent this year we are able to accomplish anything meaningful in terms of tax relief for the American public, that we ought to do it in a way, one, that is broad case based, and one that will further simplify and not complicate the Tax Code.

We have introduced legislation, the first piece of which would drop more people out of the higher 28 percent bracket into the lower 15 percent bracket. That is to say to the people of this country that we want to encourage you to work harder to improve your lot in life, to earn more. In saying that, we are not going to, as a matter of policy, take from you 28 cents of each additional dollar that you earn.

In fact, our legislation which raises the income threshold at which the 28 percent rate would apply actually drops 10 million filers in this country out of the higher 28 percent bracket and into the lower 15 percent bracket. In all, 29 million filers in America would benefit from this tax relief to the tune of about \$1,200 per filer. That is real relief for the people, the hard working taxpayers in this country.

Whether the issue is health care, child care, retirement or education, this enables the people of this country to make the decision in the fundamental way about what is the best way to meet those needs. They can take those dollars that they would save in the form of lower taxes and apply that toward child care needs, towards education needs, toward health care needs.

That is a matter of philosophy, something we very much agree with, and that is that the people of this country ought to be trusted to make that decision on their own, rather than having the bureaucracy in Washington direct targeted tax relief and say you are a winner or loser based upon whether or